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ABSTRACT

In this bulletin, recent demographic and socioeconomic trends among American blacks are reviewed and compared with trends among whites. The report includes information on black population growth and composition; rural-urban distribution; fertility and family planning practice; mortality; migration; family structure and marital status; education; employment and occupation; income and poverty levels; and the future of American blacks. Among the findings are that: (1) while some suburbanization is occurring among blacks, the majority remain segregated in central cities; (2) overall fertility, as well as teenage and out-of-wedlock fertility, remain higher for blacks than for whites; (3) the black infant mortality rate is double that of whites; (4) divorce and separation have risen faster for blacks than for whites; (5) the poverty rate is over three times higher and unemployment is twice as high for blacks compared to whites; and (6) occupational status of blacks has improved and their educational attainment is now close to that of whites. It is suggested that current cutbacks in socioeconomic assistance must be reversed if gains in black educational and occupational attainment are to be retained and black-white income differentials are to be minimized. In addition, it is held that the problem of job competition between blacks and growing numbers of immigrants must be addressed. (Author/MJL)

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Black America in the 1980s

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Abstract—This *Bulletin* reviews recent demographic and socioeconomic trends in the U.S. black population in order to assess changes in the status of blacks relative to whites since publication of the 1962 edition of Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 classic, *An American Dilemma*. Blacks numbered 26.5 million in 1980, 11.7 percent of the total population, with 85 percent residing in urban areas compared to 71 percent of whites. Some suburbanization is now occurring among blacks but the majority remain segregated in central cities. In the 1970s, more blacks moved into the South than moved out in a reversal of the historic pattern. Blacks have shared the baby bust since the mid-1960s but teenage and out-of-wedlock fertility remain much higher than for whites as well as overall fertility (2.3 compared to 1.8 births per woman in 1979). Black infant mortality is still double that of whites and life expectancy is six years shorter (68.3 versus 74.4 years in 1979). Single parents (mostly mothers) with children now comprise 31 percent of black families compared to 10 percent for the general population. Divorce and separation have risen faster for blacks than whites. Many of these gaps are related to blacks' continuing socioeconomic disadvantages: median family income is 56 percent that of whites; the poverty rate is 3.5 times higher; unemployment is twice as high. Occupational status has improved for blacks and their educational attainment is now close to that of whites, but these gains may be slowed and income differentials unimproved if the current administration's reversal of socioeconomic policy remains unchanged. Blacks are also affected more than other groups by the recent surge in immigrants who compete directly for the low-level jobs on which many blacks must still rely.

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Black America in the 1980s

By John Reid

Page

Introduction 3
Population Growth and Composition 4
Where Blacks Live 6
Fertility and Family Planning 8
Mortality 14
Migration 18
Family and Marital Status 20
Education 23
Employment and Occupation 26
Income and Poverty 29
The Future of Black America 32
References 35
Selected Bibliography 38

Figures

1. Growth of Black and Total U.S. Population: 1790-1980 2
2. Age-Sex Composition of Black and White Populations: 1980 5
3. Metropolitan Population Living Inside and Outside Central Cities, Blacks and Whites: 1960 and 1980 7
4. Total Fertility Rates for Nonwhite and White Women: 1917-1979 9
5. Life Expectancy at Birth for Nonwhites and Whites: 1900-1979 15
6. Black and White Infant Mortality Rates: 1940-1979 17
7. Black and White Unemployment Rates: 1960-1982 27

Tables

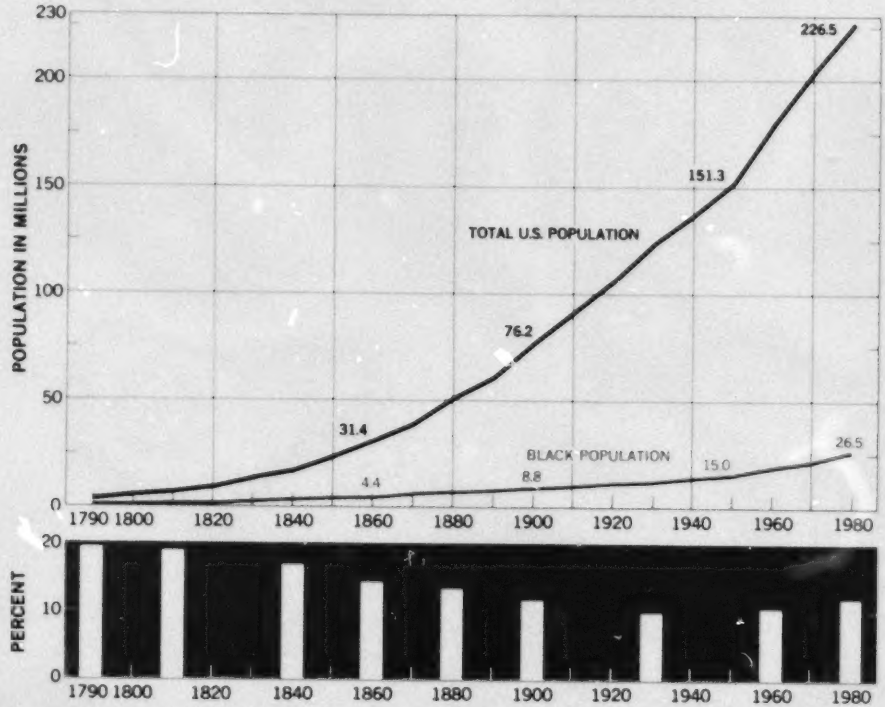
1. Black and White Population in Urban and Rural Areas: 1890-1980 6
2. Central Cities of 100,000 and More Population with Black Majorities: 1960 and 1980 7
3. Fertility of Black and White Women, by Education: June 1981 11
4. Black and White Death Rates, by Age and Sex: 1979 16
5. Ratio of Black to White Age-Adjusted Death Rates for the 15 Leading Causes of Death: 1979 16
6. Net Migration of Blacks, by Region: 1910-20 to 1975-80 19
7. Black and All Families: 1970 and 1980 21
8. Marital Status of Blacks and All Races in Selected Age Groups, by Sex: 1960, 1970, 1980 22
9. Black and White School Enrollment, by Age: 1970 and 1980 24
10. Educational Attainment of Persons Aged 25 and over, by Race: 1940, 1960, 1980 25
11. Proportion of Blacks Among Workers in Selected Occupations: 1980 28
12. Median Income of Black and White Families: 1960, 1970-1981 29
13. Black and White Families Below Poverty Level: 1959, 1966-1981 31

POPULATION BULLETIN

Vol. 37, No. 4, December 1982

4

Figure 1. Growth of Black and Total U. S. Population: 1790-1980



Sources: Bureau of the Census, "The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical Review, 1790-1978," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, No. 80, 1979, Table 1; *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1, 1975, Series A 6-8; and 1980 Census data.

Arthur Haupt

5

Black America in the 1980s

By **John Reid**
Howard University
Washington, D.C.

"Mankind is sick of fear and disbelief, of pessimism and cynicism. It needs the youthful, moralistic optimism of America. But empty declarations only deepen cynicism. Deeds are called for. If America in actual practice could show the world a progressive trend by which the Negro became finally integrated into modern democracy, all mankind would be given faith again—it would have reason to believe that peace, progress and order are feasible and America would have a spiritual power many times stronger than all her financial and military resources—the power of the trust and support of all good people on earth. *America is free to choose whether the Negro should remain her liability or become her opportunity.*"[1]

So wrote Gunnar Myrdal in his monumental study of black Americans, *An American Dilemma*, first published in 1944 and updated as well as abridged in 1962. Much transpired in the 18-year interim between publications. The landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision forever banning racial discrimination, at least legally, ranks at the top of the list. Antedating it, however, was the Truman Executive Order of 1950, desegregating the Armed Forces during the Korean War. These two governmental decisions helped raise the consciousness of all Americans on the "Negro problem," and by 1962, school desegregation and the civil rights revolution were under way. But the black American was still barely accepted in the mainstream society and the question remained: "Is the Negro to be a liability or an opportunity for America?" Also unresolved was the dilemma exhaustively explored in Myrdal's book—the fact that the American Creed of "liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity for everybody" to which all Americans adhere "on the general plane" had in practice been extended least of all to American blacks.

John Reid, who holds the Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago, is currently Graduate Professor in Sociology at Howard University in Washington D.C., where he is also involved in the development of a population studies center. He was formerly at Atlanta University where he served as Ware Professor and Chairman of the Department of Sociology, editor of Phylon, *and Director of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for the Study of the American Black. He has also taught at Southern University, Albion College, McMurray College, and Albany State, and has been a visiting demographic researcher at the Bureau of the Census. He has conducted national conferences and published articles on the demography and health of American blacks.*

Dr. Reid is grateful to Leon Bouvier of the Population Reference Bureau for special help in the preparation of this Population Bulletin, *and to Ron Manuel of Howard University for comments on the original manuscript.*

It is now 1982 and again it can be said that much has transpired over the past two decades. The civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s under the Johnson administration set the stage for advances in all aspects of societal living for black Americans. Affirmative action programs following upon this legislation have enabled many black Americans to move up the socioeconomic ladder, compensating in part for 300 years of discrimination.

But the picture is far from being as rosy as it might be. Twenty years of effort are far from enough to make up for 300 years of subjugation. Yet there are those in American society who feel that too much has already been done for black Americans, particularly when it affects the white majority negatively. There are those who feel that U.S. concerns should now be directed more toward other disadvantaged minorities, although blacks, ironically, have been residents of this nation for longer than most other ethnic groups. Finally, the economic policies of the current administration have had a strong negative impact on the status of black Americans, particularly that large proportion in poverty or at the brink of poverty. Clearly, the black American is at still another crossroads on a very difficult path from complete slavery, to serfdom, to token acceptance by the majority, to complete partnership in the system that is called the United States. In 1982, the question can once again be asked: "Is the Negro still a liability or an opportunity for America?"

This *Bulletin* does not pretend to update *An American Dilemma*. Rather it concentrates on the demographic and socioeconomic dimensions of the changes that have occurred to black Americans, particularly in the past two decades, to help evaluate what progress may have occurred and perhaps to offer answers to that above question. Such an approach is not new. Writing in 1965 on "Demographic Factors in the Integration of the Negro," demographer Philip Hauser commented that "the size, rate of growth, distribution, and composition of the Negro population will influence integration and provide some indicators of the extent to which it has been achieved."[2] Following these guidelines, this *Bulletin* demonstrates how demographic and socioeconomic statistics can tell us a great deal about the status of the black American today.

Population Growth and Composition

Blacks have been present in what is now the United States since as early as 1619 when the first slave-bearing ships landed in Virginia. In 1650 the American colonies included 48,768 whites and about 1,600 blacks.[3] By 1790 in the first census taken by the new Republic some 3.9 million persons were enumerated, of whom 750,000, or 19.3 percent, were black. Both the total U.S. population and the black population have grown dramatically since that date (see Figure 1, page 2). The black population reached 4.4 million just prior to the Civil War and doubled to 8.8 million by 1900. It passed the 15 million mark in 1950 and in the most recent 1980 census, 26,488,218 blacks were counted, representing 11.7 percent of the total U.S. population of 226.5 million.

The 11.7 percent black proportion of the total population in 1980 is the highest it has been since the late 19th century. Blacks were about one-fifth of the national total from 1790 to 1810. The proportion then declined gradually to 11.6 percent in 1900 and 9.7 percent in 1930. Since then the proportion has again increased slowly. Reasons for the decline and then increase in proportion are straightforward. Early in the 19th century most slave movements came to an end—legally in 1808. Any further growth in the black population had to come from natural increase: that is, births minus deaths. Although fertility was quite high, so too was mortality. On the other hand, white immigration after 1820 was large and grew even larger toward the end of the century and into the first two decades

of the 20th century. White fertility was also quite high, but mortality was lower than among blacks. After 1920 white immigration levels were drastically reduced until very recently, and natural increase among blacks has been significantly greater than among whites.

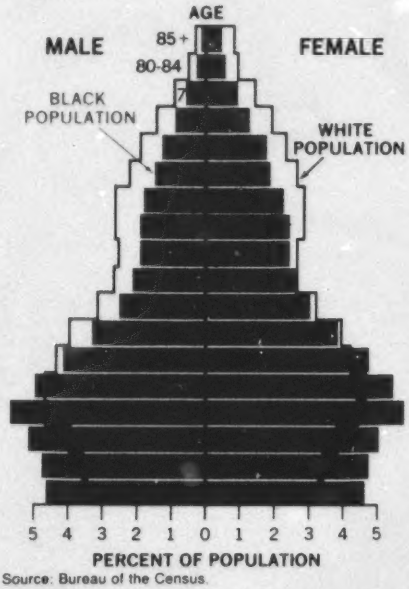
Age differences

The black population has always been "younger" than its white counterpart. In 1840 the median ages were 17.3 for blacks and 17.9 for whites. (The median marks the point at which half the population is younger and half is older.) The difference increased over the next century in part because of higher fertility among blacks. By 1950 the median age was 26.1 for blacks and 30.8 for whites. The difference grew larger by 1960: 23.5 to 30.3. In 1980 blacks averaged 24.9, whites, 31.3.

Because of its younger age, the black population will grow somewhat faster than the white population even if fertility, mortality, and migration are the same for both groups. As Ernest Attah has noted: "Given its younger initial age structure, the nonwhite population has a greater momentum toward growth than does the white population. As a result, the peak size of the nonwhite population is proportionally greater, compared to its initial size, than is that of the corresponding white population."[4]

A more important impact of age differential can be seen in the dependency ratio: the number of persons of dependent age (0-14 and 65 and over) per 100 persons of "active" age (15-64). In 1910 the dependency ratio for both groups was very similar—about 105. That is, for every 100 persons of working age there were about 105 persons either under 15 or over 64. By 1960 the dependency ratio for blacks was up to 107 and by 1980 it had fallen to 91.7. For whites the dependency ratio was 67 in 1960 and 73.9 in 1980. Clearly, the burden of dependency is far greater for blacks than for whites and as Hauser noted, "this has important implications for integration."[5]

Figure 2. Age-Sex Composition of Black and White Populations: 1980



Source: Bureau of the Census.

In sum, the black population in the United States increased from 750,000 in 1790 to 26.5 million in 1980. Over this period, the black proportion of the national population first fell significantly and in recent years has once again increased somewhat. Blacks as a whole have always been and remain today a relatively "young" population, with a current median age of about 25 years. Figure 2 shows the age-sex distribution of the black population in 1980 superimposed on the white population by proportions. Age differences are obvious: 12.1 percent of whites are 65 and over compared to only 7.9 percent for blacks; 21.3 percent of whites are under 15 while 28.7 percent of blacks fall in that category.

Interestingly, both groups show the tremendous influence of the baby boom,

especially the years 1955 to 1964 when fertility levels were particularly high. For both groups, the cohorts aged 15-24 in 1980 are the largest, considerably larger than the groups under age ten, born during the baby bust of the 1970s. This phenomenon will be discussed in further detail later in this *Bulletin.**

Where Blacks Live

Until 1910, at least 90 percent of all blacks lived in the South. After World War I, however, blacks began moving out of the South in large numbers as the South's agricultural economy experienced difficulties and blacks continued to be excluded from the political and economic mainstream, and as jobs for semiskilled and unskilled laborers opened up in the growing industrial centers of the North with the decline in immigrants from Europe.[6] By 1940 the proportion of blacks living in the South was down to 77 percent, despite a sharp slowdown in outmigration from the region during the Depression of the 1930s. By 1950 the proportion had dropped to 68 percent, reflecting southern blacks' response to the World War II demand for labor in the industrial North and far West. Blacks continued to leave the South in large numbers during the 1950s and 1960s; by 1970 only 53 percent of all blacks lived in that region. In 1980, however, the proportion was the same because during the 1970s, as we shall see, more blacks moved into the South than moved out, in a dramatic reversal of the historic pattern.

Rural to urban areas

The movement of blacks out of the South meant not only a physical move from one part of the nation to another but also a change from a rural to an urban way of life. As recently as 1910, 73 percent of all blacks lived in rural areas (see Table 1). Within 50 years, less than a lifetime, 73 percent were living in *urban* areas. Indeed, in 1960 blacks were more likely to live in urban areas than whites—73 percent compared to 70 percent. By 1980, 85 percent of blacks lived in urban areas compared to 71 percent of whites.

Table 1. Black and White Population in Urban and Rural Areas: 1890-1980

(Numbers in percent)

Year	Black		White	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1890	20	80	38	62
1910	27	73	49	51
1940	49	51	57	43
1950	62	38	64	36
1960	73	27	70	30
1970	81	19	72	28
1980	85	15	71	29

Sources: Bureau of the Census, "The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790-1978," Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 80, 1979, Table 6; and unpublished 1980 Census data.

The move from rural to urban residence also means that the number of black farmers has fallen. At their peak in 1920, Negro farm operators numbered 926,000 and comprised one-seventh of all farmers, even though many of them exercised little or no managerial function and were essentially laborers paid with shares of the crop. As a result of all the influences that have combined to lower the number of farms, only 273,000 black farmers were counted in the 1959 Census of Agriculture. By the time of the 1978 Census of Agriculture, black farmers were down to 57,271—2.3 percent of all farmers—compared to 2.4 million white farmers, or 96.8 percent of the total.

Blacks have not only moved to urban regions but within those regions they have flowed to larger metropolitan areas and particularly to the central cities in those areas. In 1910 just over one-quarter of blacks lived in what are now called Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, or SMSAs. (An SMSA is com-

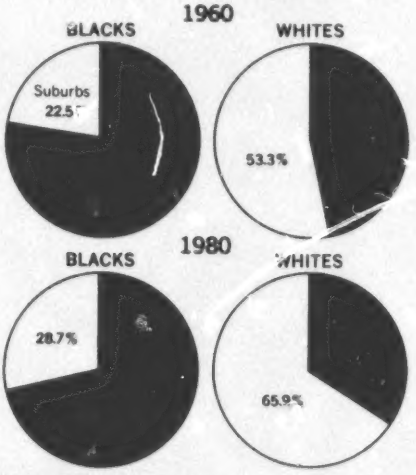
*To avoid confusion, this *Bulletin* generally refers to "blacks," although in some cases it is necessary to use data for "blacks and all others" or "nonwhites." Since over 90 percent of this category consists of blacks, this does not significantly affect the results.

posed of a city of 50,000 or more population, together with the county where it is located and surrounding counties that are socially and economically integrated with that county.) By 1960 the proportion more than doubled to 65 percent. Twenty years later in 1980, 81 percent of all blacks enumerated in the census resided in metropolitan areas, substantially more than the 73 percent of whites. The 1980 census also found that 34 percent of all blacks lived in just seven of the largest urban centers: New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, Los Angeles, and Baltimore.

Blacks living in metropolitan areas have tended to be concentrated in central cities. While whites began to move to the suburbs soon after the end of World War II, blacks remained in the central city—not always voluntarily. By 1960 more than half of all whites in SMSAs lived in the suburbs or "ring" portions of such regions; in contrast, 78 percent of SMSA blacks lived in central cities (see Figure 3). In 1980 two-thirds of all whites residing in SMSAs were in the suburbs while the proportion among blacks was 29 percent.

The increase in the black metropolitan population living in suburbs from 23 percent in 1960 to 29 percent in 1980 reflects the much-touted "suburbanization"

Figure 3. Metropolitan Population Living Inside and Outside Central Cities, Blacks and Whites: 1960 and 1980



Source: Bureau of the Census.

of blacks during the 1970s.[7] Indeed, the number of blacks living in metropolitan suburbs increased from 4.3 million in 1970 to 6.2 million in 1980. Nevertheless, blacks comprised only 6.1 percent of the country's suburban population in

Table 2. Central Cities of 100,000 and More Population with Black Majorities: 1960 and 1980

1960			1980		
City	Number of blacks	% black of total population	City	Number of blacks	% black of total population
Washington, DC	411,737	53.9	Gary, IN	101,644	70.8
			Washington, DC	448,229	70.3
			Atlanta, GA	282,917	66.6
			Detroit, MI	758,939	63.1
			Newark, NJ	191,743	58.2
			Birmingham, AL	158,223	55.6
			New Orleans, LA	308,136	55.3
			Baltimore, MD	431,151	54.8
			Richmond, VA	112,357	51.3

Sources: Bureau of Census, *1970 Census of Population, Supplementary Report, Negro Population in Selected Places and Selected Counties*, Series PC(51)-2, 1971; and unpublished 1980 Census data.

Harold M. Lambert

Blacks began moving to the suburbs during the 1970s, but most are still segregated in central cities.

1980—even less than the 8.9 percent living in city "suburbs" in 1900. Suburbs remain overwhelmingly white and central cities are increasingly black. In 1960 Washington, D.C., was the only metropolitan central city of at least 100,000 population where blacks counted for more than 50 percent of the population. By 1980 there were nine such cities (see Table 2, page 7).

Blacks since 1900 and even since 1940 have drastically redistributed themselves within the United States. First came the move in the South from rural to urban places, followed by migration to the North Central and Northeast regions and eventually the West, and then, in the 1970s, a reversal in the flow from the South. The southern black farmer has become a very small minority within the population. The black influx into urban areas has been concentrated in metropolitan areas and particularly in central cities. Some suburbanization of blacks is now taking place, and those who remain in the central cities are increasingly disadvantaged. In 1970, for example, a black family living in the central city was only 4 percent more likely to be in poverty than a black family in the suburbs; by 1980 the difference was 33 percent.[8] Central-city households headed by black women with no spouse present increased from 945,000 in 1970 to 1.6 million in 1980, and nearly 50 percent of these households had incomes below the poverty level in 1980.

Black suburbanization has also not meant much easing of residential segregation. Already in 1965, Hauser concluded: "... within the urban and metropolitan complexes the Negro American has become and has remained much more highly segregated than was true of white immigrants who flocked to the cities before them."[9] Writing in 1982 of the increased rate of black suburbanization, a team of researchers at the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, D.C., stated: "Our findings suggest that (this) is more an indication of 'spillover', or the extension of segregated city neighborhoods into deteriorating inner suburbs, than of black upward mobility into racially integrated suburbs."[10]

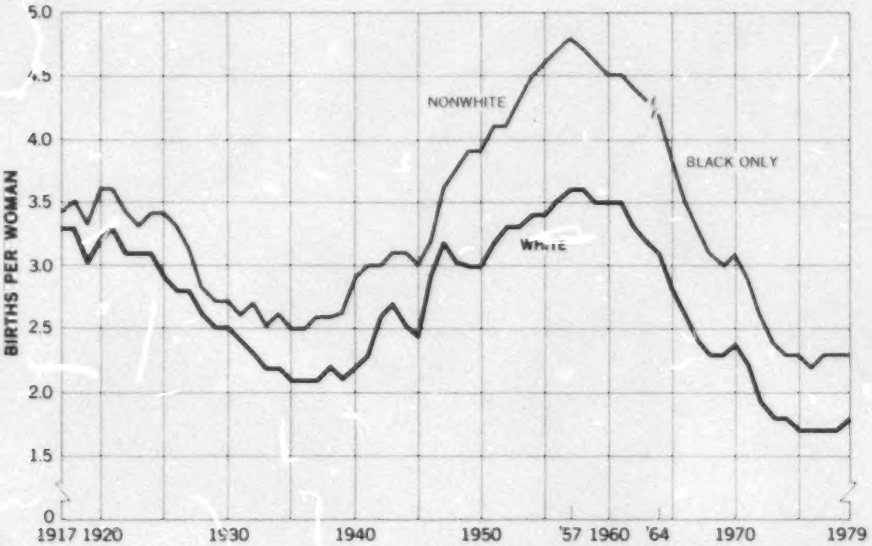
Thus, while progress has certainly occurred over the past decade, much more needs to be done if black Americans are to escape geographical and residential segregation within the reasonable future.

Fertility and Family Planning

As we have seen, the black population of the U.S. grew from 750,000 to nearly 26.5 million in less than two centuries from 1790 to 1980, reflecting an annual average growth of close to 2 percent. This extremely high rate of growth is attributable almost totally to natural increase since the importing of slaves ended early in the 19th century and immigration from black countries has been miniscule until recently. Because the black death rate was high throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, it is clear that fertility has been the prime contributor to the black population's rapid growth.

Reynolds Farley, in *Growth of the Black Population*,[11] estimates the black

Figure 4. Total Fertility Rates for Nonwhite and White Women: 1917-1979



Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States, Volume I—Natality*, annual volumes to 1978; and "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1979," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 30, No. 6, Supplement (2), September 1981, Table 4.

Note: The total fertility rate indicates the average number of children that would be born to each woman in a population if each were to live through her childbearing years (ages 15-44) bearing children at the same rate as women of those ages actually did in a given year.

pre-Civil War birth rate at more than 50 per 1,000 population. The general fertility rate of over 200 per 1,000 woman implies that each year more than one-fifth of black women aged 15 to 44 bore a child. Women who survived through the entire childbearing span must have borne an average of almost seven children. The black population of the pre-Civil War period was a youthful population; more than 45 percent were under age 15. Such a young population can have these high fertility rates.

Reliable statistics to compare the fertility of American whites and blacks are available only since about 1920 and even then are limited to nonwhites rather than blacks alone until 1964. As Figure 4 indicates, the fertility of nonwhites (of whom more than 90 percent are black) has apparently always been higher than that of white women. In 1920, for example, the total fertility rate for whites was 3.2 births per woman; for nonwhites, it was 3.6. (See note to Figure 4 for a definition of the total fertility rate.) During the Depression of the 1930s, fertility rates fell more for whites than for blacks. The post-World War II baby boom occurred among all segments of the U.S. population. For whites the peak fertility rate came in 1957 when it reached 3.6. For nonwhites, 1957 was also the peak year—just over 4.8 births per woman. The baby boom's impact was greater for blacks than for whites. The fertility rate for blacks remained high into the mid-1960s. Indeed, at the end of the baby boom in 1964, the difference in total fertility rates between whites and blacks amounted to 1.1 birth, that is, 4.2 for blacks and 3.1 for whites.

While rates are useful to illustrate fertil-

ity behavior in a particular year, the number of births is even more important when looking at the eventual impact on the population as a whole. Total births exceeded 4 million in every year between 1954 and 1964, the only time this has occurred in U.S. history. Thus, while the baby boom is generally assumed to have begun immediately after World War II, in 1947, it was not until the mid-1950s that numbers of births soared. This was particularly true for nonwhites. Annual births to nonwhites climbed to 599,000 in 1954, by far the highest annual number to that date, and remained above 600,000 from 1955 to 1972, with slight dips only in 1967 and 1968. (Data for black births alone, available from 1959, show a peak of 611,000 in 1962.[12])

The black fertility rate, however, declined rapidly along with that of white women from the mid-1960s, leading to the so-called baby bust generation of the 1970s. The white total fertility rate dropped to 1.7 births per woman in 1975 and hovered there until rising slightly to 1.8 in 1979. Total births fell from just over 4 million in 1964 to about 3.1 million a year in 1973-75 and climbed somewhat to 3.6 million in 1980 and 1981. The black fertility decline was slower than for whites, but by 1970 the black fertility rate was down to 3.1 and has hovered around 2.3 since 1973.

Black fertility fell less than that of whites during the two low-fertility "disturbances" of the 1930s Depression and 1970s baby bust and increased more than white fertility in the baby boom of 1955-64. The differential impact is noted in the age distribution of the black and white population pyramids of 1980 shown in Figure 2 (page 5). The 1955-64 baby boom birth cohort, aged 15-24 in 1980, is 21.6 percent of the black population, compared to 18.2 percent of the white population. The 1970-79 baby bust cohort (under age ten in 1980) is 18.6 percent of the black population versus 13.6 percent of the white population. Although much has been written about the societal impact of the baby boom and baby bust generations,[13] the potentially even more disturbing impact of the black baby boom and baby bust generations has been little noted. The proportion of baby boom persons reaching working age in recent years is significantly higher for blacks than for whites and proportionately more are teenagers aged 15-19 rather than aged 20-24. Also unlike whites, the relative number of blacks entering the labor force in future years will not be greatly relieved because black fertility did not decline so much during the 1970s. The number of white persons aged 20-24 in 1980 was 36 percent greater than the number under age 5; for blacks, it was only 11 percent greater.

Current unemployment problems of black youth partly reflect past fertility trends. Unfortunately, demographic circumstances do not hold much promise of improvement in the next decade or so.

Reasons for higher black fertility

The reasons for historically high black fertility are numerous. In pre-Civil War days, slave owners discouraged marriage while encouraging high fertility. In this century, such factors as rural living, poverty, lack of education, and a matriarchal family structure all contributed to high fertility. As with all groups, the relationship between education and fertility is strong for black Americans. This can be seen in Table 3 which shows that among both black and white women aged 35-44 in June 1981, the higher the level of educational attainment, the lower the fertility. Black women with a college degree or more education have the lowest fertility of any group shown (1,730 births per 1,000 women compared to 1,857 for white women with four or more years of college). The Census Bureau has found this in decennial censuses since at least 1960 and it has probably been true for many decades. Of course, however, the proportion of college-educated persons is far smaller among blacks than among whites and thus the overall differential still shows higher

Table 3. Fertility of Black and White Women, by Education: June 1981

(Children ever born per 1,000 women aged 35-44)

Years of school completed	Black	White
Elementary 0-7 years	3,879	2,512
8 years	4,605	3,209
High school 1-3 years	3,919	2,988
4 years	3,031	2,536
College 1-3 years	2,510	2,335
4 years or more	1,730	1,857

Source: Bureau of the Census, Population Division, Fertility Statistics Branch, unpublished Current Population Survey data

black fertility.

The larger proportion of poor families among blacks compared to whites also correlates with their higher overall fertility. The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey of June 1981, for example, showed that among women aged 18-44, the number of children born as of that date was 1,519 per 1,000 women in families with incomes under $5,000 per year compared to just 895 per 1,000 women in families with incomes of $25,000 and over.[14] As we shall see later, a substantially higher proportion of blacks than whites are defined as living below the poverty level.

The higher fertility of blacks should not be exaggerated. Changes over time in fertility have been very similar for blacks and whites and since the mid-1960s the black fertility rate has fallen steadily to the present level of 2.3 births per woman. By any standard this is a low level of fertility. However, completed fertility for blacks was still 33 percent higher than that of white women in June 1981—1,887 births to date per 1,000 black women aged 18-44 compared to 1,414 per 1,000 for their white counterparts. Among women aged 18 and 19, the average for blacks (411 per 1,000) was more than three times the average for whites (128 per 1,000). If teenage fertility as well as unwanted births could be substantially reduced, there is little question that black fertility could approximate white fertility levels in the near future. Among women aged 15-44 queried in the 1976 National Survey of Family Growth, black women reported that 26 percent of their births to that date had been unwanted compared to 10 percent reported by white women.[15] Teenage childbearing, mostly out of wedlock, remains a particularly serious problem for blacks.

Teenage and out-of-wedlock childbearing

Through 1972, the rates of fertility for older teenagers aged 18 and 19, both white and black, declined in concert with the decline in fertility for older women aged 20 and more. At the same time, however, there was a steady increase in rates for women under 18 along with steady growth in the teenage population—those born during the baby boom. As a result, the overall number of births to teenagers was increasing rapidly. Since 1975 both the rates of teenage childbearing and the teenage population have leveled off or declined, resulting in fewer births to teenage girls.[16]

The pattern of decline has been generally similar for black and white teenagers, but both numbers of teenage births as a proportion of total births and teenagers' birth rates remain much higher for blacks than for whites. From 1975 to 1979, births to black women under age 20 dropped 6 percent (168,400 to 158,900); for white teenagers the drop was 7 percent (415,200 to 388,200).[17] As a proportion of total births in each group, teenage births fell from 33 percent to 28 percent for blacks in this period and from 16 percent to 14 percent for whites. In 1979, the birth rate for black women aged 18 and 19 was double that of white women that age (147 per 1,000 compared to 72); among women aged 15-17, the black rate was more than three times the white rate (77 per 1,000 versus 25).

Although total births and overall fertility rates have declined for both black and white teenagers in recent years, rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing have increased. In the three years from 1976 to 1979, the proportion of births born out of wedlock among blacks rose from 71 percent to 79 percent for older teenagers aged 18 and 19 and from 90 percent to 93 percent for women aged 15-17. For white teenagers the rise was from 19 percent to 24 percent for 18- and 19-year-olds and from 36 percent to 42 percent for the 15-17 year-olds. (The proportion of out-of-wedlock births for all women of childbearing age in 1979 was 55 percent for blacks and 9 percent for whites.[18])

The fact that most births to black adolescents are out-of-wedlock is important. Generally the mother has little financial help from the father of the child who himself is probably a teenager. The negative consequences for the mother and the child, as well as the community are a major concern for black Americans.

Black leaders have become particularly concerned. William Haskins, Director of Social Services and Human Resources for the National Urban League, recently observed that the mushrooming numbers of teenage pregnancies and fatherless families threaten to halt black progress in its tracks and throw a shadow over generations to come.[19] The Urban League and other major black national organizations are now seeking community-based solutions to the problem—attempting to get "middle-class" blacks involved—black fraternities and sororities, the Elks and Masons, black doctors and lawyers. As Haskins put it: "They've got to come back to the inner city and volunteer to work person-to-person with young blacks and tell them there is a better way you can make it."

The concern of leading black organizations is encouraging. In past years civil rights leaders tended to dismiss the problems of teenage pregnancy and female-headed households as fruits of racism or economic deprivation. These excuses are now fading. Overt racism has diminished since the early 1960s, while out-of-wedlock childbearing among blacks, particularly teenagers, has ballooned.

Arthur Haupt

The high rate of teenage childbearing is of growing concern in the black community.

Involving middle-class blacks will not be easy. In fact, the middle-class blacks who fled to the suburbs are increasingly alienated from the underclass that presently inhabits the central city. The exodus of community leaders from the central city has combined with a lessening of former moral restraints in the life styles of central-city blacks who migrated from rural to urban areas. The results may in some degree be associated with high rates of black teenage fertility and out-of-wedlock childbearing.

The harmful consequences of teenage pregnancy that lie behind growing concern with this problem in the black community were spelled out in the 1981 publication of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, *Teenage Pregnancy: The Problem That Hasn't Gone Away*.

"The health, social and economic consequences of teenage pregancy are almost all adverse. Pregnancies that end in abortion or miscarriage are, at the least, upsetting and sometimes traumatic to the pregnant women. They also involve some health risks to the teenager (although abortions before the 16th week of pregnancy are less dangerous than childbirth). Those pregnancies that result in births, however—most of which are unintended—have the most obvious negative consequences and are of most concern.

Babies born to teenage mothers are much more likely to die in the first year of life than those born to mothers over age 20. Maternal mortality and morbidity, and the risk of having a low-birth-weight infant, are also considerably greater among teenage mothers.

The most far-reaching consequence of teenage childbearing is the truncation of education among the young parents, and the resulting limitation of opportunities to gain skills needed to compete in society. Largely because of educational deficits, teenage parents are frequently unable to get decent jobs, and their family incomes tend to be much lower than those earned by other families.

The high probability that a teenage mother will bring up her child in a home with no father present is another reason her family income is so low. Even if they do marry, teenage parents are far more likely to spend a large part of their childhood in one-parent households. Alone, with small children, little education and few skills, it is small wonder that many teenage mothers find themselves on welfare or living below the officially designated poverty level. What income they have needs to be stretched to feed more young mouths, since teenage mothers have more births and more unintended births in the course of their reproductive lives than do those who delay childbearing until their 20s.

Living in poverty, lacking education and opportunity and being brought up in a one-parent home hurts the children of teenage parents, too. Such children are likely to have lower IQ and achievement scores than others, and are more likely to repeat school grades than other children. When they grow up, they are more likely than others to become teenage parents themselves."

Contraception and abortion

The relatively low fertility of the 1970s suggests that family planning—whether contraception or abortion—has been embraced by most black women. National data on contraceptive use are available only for currently married women aged 15-44 from the 1973 and 1976 rounds of the National Survey of Family Growth.[20] Data on contraceptive use among teenage women aged 15-19 living in metropolitan areas are available from surveys conducted by Johns Hopkins University demographers Melvin Zelnik and John Kantner in 1971, 1976 and 1979.[21] Data on legal abortions by race from 1973 to 1978 (the latest year available) come from the Abortion Surveillance reports of the Centers for Disease Control.[22]

In 1973, 45 percent of currently married black women aged 15-44 were using contraception and another 15 percent had themselves, or their husbands, been sterilized for contraceptive purposes. Among their white counterparts, the proportions were 54 percent and 17 percent, respectively. Three years later, in 1976, the proportion of contraceptive users was the same for black women (45 percent) but use of contraceptive sterilization had dropped to 13 percent; among whites, contraceptive use dropped to 49 percent but sterilization rose to 20 percent. Sterilization is apparently increasingly popular among white couples but not among blacks; in both 1973 and 1976, also, more than half the sterilizations among whites were obtained by the husband while most sterilizations among black couples were obtained by the wife. The proportion of black married women who were fecund but not using contraception (and not pregnant or seeking pregnancy) was about double the proportion for whites in both 1973 and 1976. Use of the pill, though by far the most popular contraceptive method among both black and white married women, dropped for both groups between 1973 and 1976. To some extent, white couples compensated for this with an increase in sterilization while black married women, especially poor and younger women, shifted to less effective traditional methods, such as foam and rhythm. These

differences in contraceptive use among black and white married women may partially explain the continued difference in fertility between the two groups.

Among teenage women aged 15-19, higher rates of premarital intercourse as well as somewhat less use of contraception appear to play a role in blacks' higher rates of fertility and especially out-of-wedlock fertility. The Johns Hopkins surveys found that the rapid increase in premarital intercourse among teenage women in metropolitan areas during the 1970s was due almost entirely to an increase in premarital sexual activity among white women, but in 1979 blacks were still far more likely than whites to have had sexual intercourse before marriage—66 percent compared to 47 percent. Contraceptive use increased among both black and white sexually active teenagers during the 1970s, but in 1979, 36 percent of such black women reported that they never used contraception compared to 24 percent of their white counterparts. As with older women, the pill is the most popular method among teenage women who do use contraception, but pill use declined dramatically among white teenagers between 1976 and 1979, to be replaced largely by withdrawal; this pattern did not appear among black contracepting teenagers. Predictably, the Johns Hopkins researchers found that the incidence of premarital pregnancy rose dramatically for both black and white teenagers during the 1970s but add: "Nevertheless, proportionally fewer premarital pregnancies are resulting in live births to unmarried young women because of the increased recourse of teenagers to abortion."

Although blacks, in national attitude surveys, have indicated consistently that they have greater reservations about abortion than whites, black women have been considerably more likely than white women to terminate unwanted pregnancies since abortion was legalized nationwide in 1973. In a survey of 1975, for example, 16 percent of blacks interviewed were opposed to abortion for any reason compared to only 8 percent for whites, and fewer blacks than whites favored abortion on request (58 percent versus 62 percent).[23] Nevertheless, between 1973 and 1978, the proportion of nonwhite women (most of whom are black) among women obtaining legal abortions rose from 28 percent to 33 percent, although nonwhite women represent only about 20 percent of women of reproductive age.

Abortion ratios and rates also reflect black women's greater use of abortion. In 1973 the abortion ratio for nonwhite women (289 abortions per 1,000 live births) was 1.7 times greater than that of white women (175); by 1978 it was more than twice as high (586 compared to 289). In 1978 the abortion rate for nonwhite women of 60.4 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44 was over two-and-a-half times higher than the rate of 22.7 for white women.

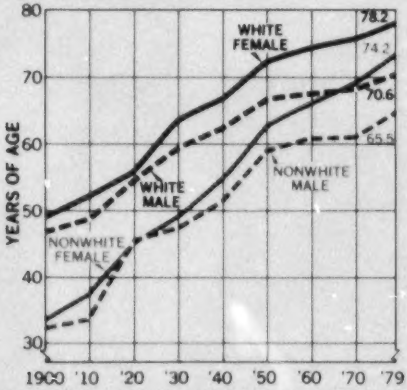
The fact that blacks are obtaining abortions more frequently than whites probably reflects their having more unplanned pregnancies. This could be due to one or a combination of several factors: a greater increase in sexual activity among blacks than whites (though this is not true among black teenagers); increased fecundity per given coital event; use of less effective methods of contraception than whites; and/or coercive pressures on black women to abort their pregnancies rather than to carry them to term. There is no simple way to determine the extent to which each of these possibilities is operative, individually or collectively.

Mortality

Life expectancy

A black American born today can be expected to live about six years less than a white American infant, on average. While this is an indictment of the American system it nevertheless represents the least difference in life expectancy ever recorded for the two groups. In 1900 a newborn nonwhite baby could be expected to live 33 years, on average, while

Figure 5. Life Expectancy at Birth for Nonwhites and Whites: 1900-1979



Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1978*, Volume II—Section 5, *Life Tables* (Hyattsville,MD: 1980); and "Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1979," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol 31, No 6, Supplement, September 1982, Table 3.

the average for a white baby was 47.6 years. As Figure 5 shows, nonwhites have made even more progress than whites since then, particularly nonwhite females. By 1960 the overall difference had narrowed to seven years (70.6 for whites versus 63.6 for nonwhites). In 1979, the most recent year for which such data are available, the difference between whites and nonwhites was just 4.6 years (74.4 versus 69.8), but life expectancy at birth for blacks alone was 68.3 years, hence the gap between whites and blacks was 6.1 years.[24]

Black American men have the lowest life expectancy among the four race-sex groups. On the average, a black male born in 1979 will live 64.0 years compared to 70.6 for white males; for black females the average is 72.7 versus 78.2 years for white females. It is particularly significant that life expectancy at birth for black males has not yet reached 65 years, the age at which retirement with full Social Security benefits is possible. According to the most recent data, the average 20-year-old black American male, presumably just entering the labor force and paying into the Social Security retirement system, can expect to live another 46.4 years or not quite to age 66½.[25] If the "age-specific" death rates of 1979 were to remain unchanged, only 57 percent of such 20-year-old black American men would survive to collect full retirement benefits at age 65. In contrast, about three-quarters of all white American men now aged 20 would live to reap these awards.

While racial differentials in life expectancy persist, and will no doubt continue to exist as long as socioeconomic differentials are present, the improvement in black longevity in just 75 years is striking. Life expectancy for nonwhites doubled between 1900 and 1974—remarkable progress in such a relatively short period. It remains to be seen if this will continue to eventual convergence with whites.

A comparison of crude death rates, that is, the number of deaths per 1,000 population, presents a different but misleading picture. Since 1975 the annual crude death rate for blacks has been lower than that of whites. In 1979 that rate was 8.5 per 1,000 population for blacks and 8.8 for whites. Such a comparison could be interpreted to argue that blacks have caught up with whites in terms of improved death rates. In fact, however, the lower overall crude death rate for blacks simply reflects the fact that proportionately more of the total black population is in the young ages where death rates are low and fewer are in the elderly ages where death rates are high. Table 4 (page 16) shows that death rates by age group are considerably higher for black males and females than their white counterparts at all ages up to 85 years and over.

Causes of death

Diseases of the heart are the principal cause of death in the U. S. for all groups. Among blacks, 31 percent of all deaths were attributable to this cause in 1979.[26] Cancer was the next leading cause, again for black and whites, males and females. This was followed by stroke for

Table 4. Black and White Death Rates, by Age and Sex: 1979

(Deaths per 100,000 population)

Age	Males		Females	
	Black	White	Black	White
Under 1 year	2,830	1,330	2,375	1,029
1-4	107	66	92	52
5-14	50	38	31	24
15-24	204	171	74	56
25-34	428	172	152	67
35-44	699	259	318	140
45-54	1,400	710	768	376
55-64	2,818	1,754	1,580	889
65-74	4,692	4,008	2,859	2,014
75-84	10,393	9,149	7,377	5,646
85 and over	10,746	17,361	8,159	13,565

Source: National Center for Health Statistics "Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1979," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 31, No. 6, Supplement, September 1982, Table 2.

Americans as a whole, although accidents are the third leading cause of death for black and white males. Six deaths in ten among black Americans in 1979 were the result of one of the three major chronic killers—heart disease, cancer, and stroke. For whites, the proportion was seven in every ten deaths. The proportion for blacks (or nonwhites) has increased from 52 percent in 1960 and 55 percent in 1970.

Ironically, this increase indicates certain improvements in the health status of the black population. Fewer of them are dying from infectious diseases like pneumonia, tuberculosis, and childhood diseases which are most often associated with poor living conditions and medical care, and more are surviving to die from the chronic diseases which strike older people regardless of race. Nevertheless, when death rates by cause are adjusted to take account of the younger overall age of the black population, the rates for blacks are almost invariably higher than those of whites, as seen in Table 5. For example, the age-adjusted death rates for 1979 show that blacks are about 1.3 times as likely as whites to die from heart disease and more than twice as likely to die from diabetes. Such differences reflect the still substantial variations in life style and circumstances (and thus integration) between the two groups.

Particularly lethal for blacks are accidents and homicide—the socalled "external" causes of death, along with suicide. Blacks are more than six times as likely as whites to die from homicide (and "legal intervention"). This is especially true for black males. Indeed, 15 percent of all deaths to black men in 1979 were attributable to accidents, homicide, and suicide compared to 10 percent for white men. Blacks are also particularly susceptible to "diseases of early infancy" for which their death rate is more than twice that of whites. As noted below, differences in infant mortality rates indicate the same major discrepancy.

Table 5. Ratio of Black to White Age-Adjusted Death Rates for the 15 Leading Causes of Death: 1979

Rank	Causes of death	Ratio of black to white
1	Heart diseases	1.27
2	Cancer	1.32
3	Stroke	1.80
4	Accidents	1.20
5	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	0.75
6	Pneumonia and influenza	1.61
7	Diabetes	2.21
8	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	1.90
9	Atherosclerosis	1.09
10	Suicide	0.60
11	Diseases of early infancy	2.14
12	Homicide and legal intervention	6.26
13	Nephritis	2.97
14	Congenital anomalies	0.96
15	Septicemia	2.85

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1979," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 31, No. 6, Supplement, 1982, Table C.

As with fertility, the picture of overall black mortality indicates progress but still no convergence with whites. Changes in causes of death among black Americans over the past two decades are all in the "correct" direction—toward chronic diseases and away from infectious diseases. Clearly, however, much more improvement is needed if blacks are ever to catch up with whites.

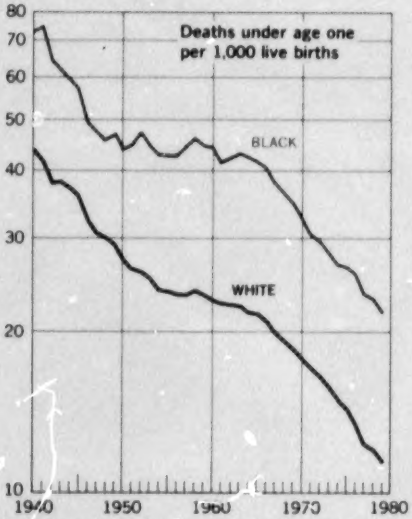
Infant mortality

Infant mortality rates also reveal progress for blacks as well as whites over the past two decades, but, unlike life expectancy, the gap between blacks and whites has not narrowed at all. In 1979—the latest year for which data are available by race—the overall infant mortality rate stood at a record low of 13.1 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. For white infants the rate was 11.4 and for blacks, 21.8 (see Figure 6). The black rate was 1.9 times the white rate—the same differential as in 1960 when the rates were 44.3 for blacks and 22.9 for whites.

Blacks have consistently exhibited the highest infant mortality rates of all racial groups in the U. S. American Indians, the group with the next highest rate, have had lower rates than blacks since 1961. To be sure, the black infant mortality rate has fallen rapidly, particularly since 1966 when it was 40.2 births per 1,000 live births and the last year it was over 40. In but 13 years, the rate fell 18.4 points, or 46 percent. However, the white rate fell nearly as much over the same 13 years, from 20.6 (the last year it was over 20) to 11.4—8.2 points or 40 percent.

Why are newborn black babies still almost twice as likely as white babies to die before reaching their first birthday? One factor is differential birth weight. In 1979 black infants were more than twice as likely as white infants (12.7 percent compared to 5.9 percent) to weigh 2,500 grams or less at birth.[27] At this low birth weight, an infant's chances of dying during the first month of life are 40 times greater than for the infant of normal weight and five times greater during the

Figure 6. Black and White Infant Mortality Rates: 1940-1979



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1979," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Volume 31, No. 6, Supplement, September 1982, Figure 5.

subsequent 11 months. Low birth weight is closely associated with low Apgar scores—a measure used to evaluate an infant's heart rate, breathing, muscle tone, "reflex irritability," and color at one and five minutes after birth, with scores running from zero to a maximum of ten. Here, too, black infants do poorly, with proportions recording low scores (0-3) at both one and five minutes about twice those of white newborns in 1979.[28]

The little evidence available by socioeconomic status indicates that mortality differences are substantially smaller between black and white infants of similar backgrounds. Clearly, most of the overall differential is accounted for by the higher proportion of black infants born to disadvantaged women. Helen Foster Giles notes that having a low-birth-weight baby is closely associated with mothers who are

under age 20 or over 35, unmarried, and of low income and minimal education, and the proportions of black mothers in these categories are higher than for white mothers.[29]

Since the publication of *An American Dilemma* in 1944, much progress has transpired among black Americans, and this is true of mortality and, by implication, health conditions. Yet much more needs to be done if parity with whites is ever to be achieved. That being born black still means six fewer years of life on average than for a white reveals that the American Creed, with its insistence on the equality of all citizens, is still far from a reality for black America. Of all the basic rights bestowed on an individual by virtue of being American, the right to longevity seems particularly critical. The fact that only slightly over half of young black males can aspire to Social Security retirement benefits also illustrates blacks' persistent disadvantage; one might speculate to what extent the U.S. Social Security system is supported by black males.

A newborn black baby is still almost twice as likely as a white baby to die before reaching its first birthday and is likely to weight less and score less on Apgar measures. The black mother is less likely to receive prenatal care and is four times more likely than a white mother to die in giving birth. (The 1979 maternal mortality rate was 25 deaths per 100,000 live births for black women versus 6 for white women.[30])

Black children are less likely to receive health care. In 1979, for example, just 39 percent of nonwhite children aged 1-4 had had polio shots compared to 64 percent of white children that age.[31] The differences are similar for other immunizations, such as against measles and rubella. All this indicates that poverty remains prevalent among black Americans and, given the current administration's planned reduction in public health programs on which low-income persons rely, one can anticipate little progress toward parity in the near future.

Migration

For as long as they have inhabited this planet, humans have migrated, seeking to better their lot in life. Unfortunately, that is not the whole story. On occasion, people who preferred to remain "home" have been forced to move. Human bondage has been one of the prime causes of such involuntary movements. The slave trade between Africa and the Americas resulted in "an estimated 9.6 million slaves [being] transported to the New World from 1651 until the abolition of slavery in the 19th century . . . . This was the greatest slave migration in history in terms of distance and numbers moved."[32] Blacks, like other Americans, are here because their ancestors moved here. Unlike other Americans, their ancestral move was almost entirely involuntary.

Internal migration

Just as the move to America had been involuntary, so too was the failure to move for the next two centuries after arriving here. Slaves were not allowed to move of their own volition and only a few runaways "changed residence." It was not until after World War I that any significant migration occurred among black Americans. Once begun, however, the movement was enormous. Referring to this early migration from the rural South, Taeuber and Taeuber wrote: "The volume of these movements during some decades has been nearly unbelievable, especially when it is recognized that the movement often involves radical transformation in the way of life of the Negro migrant."[33]

Table 6 shows the net migration of blacks between regions from 1910 to 1980. Net movement from the South was quite large until dampened by the Depression of the 1930s. The exodus resumed momentum in 1941 at the start of World War II and in both the 1940s and 1950s the South lost about 1.5 million blacks to the rest of the nation, especially

Table 6. Net Migration of Blacks, by Region: 1910-20 to 1975-80

(Numbers in thousands)

Period	South	Northeast	North Central	West
1910-20	- 454	+ 182	+ 244	+ 28
1920-30	- 749	+ 349	+ 364	+ 36
1930-40	- 347	+ 171	+ 128	+ 49
1940-50	- 1,599	+ 463	+ 618	+ 339
1950-60	- 1,473	+ 496	+ 541	+ 293
1960-70	- 1,380	+ 612	+ 382	+ 301
1970-75	+ 14	- 64	- 52	+ 102
1975-80	+ 195	- 175	- 51	+ 30

Sources: 1910-1970: Bureau of Census, "The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790-1978," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, No. 80, 1979, Table 8; 1970-1975: "Mobility of the Population of the United States: March 1970 to March 1975," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 285, 1975, Table 28; 1975-1980: "Geographical Mobility of the Population of the United States: March 1975 to March 1980," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 368, 1981, Table 42.

the Northeast and North Central regions.

The pattern began to change in the mid-1960s. In the second half of the decade, net migration of blacks from the South dropped to 216,000 and the North Central and West regions received considerably more blacks than the Northeast. The stage was set for a major reversal in black migration patterns.

For many blacks Americans as well as whites, the South, with its burgeoning economy, mild climate, and relaxed life style, became the mecca of the 1970s. As employment opportunities grew rapidly in the South and declined in the decaying industrial centers of the North, and with a racial tensions eased in the wake of the civil rights movement, a flood of northern blacks moved or returned to the South and fewer moved out. About as many blacks moved to the South as moved out in the first half of the decade and, probably for the first time ever, more blacks left the Northeast and North Central regions than moved in. Only the West registered a major net inmigration of blacks. By 1975-80 the pattern was clear. Not only were blacks moving South in large numbers and fewer were leaving, but the region was also receiving more blacks than the West, while the two northern regions were losing still more blacks. Net black migration into the South amounted to almost 200,000. Over the 1970-80 decade, 717,000 blacks moved South while only about 500,000 left the region.

Press stories of blacks' "return" or move "back to the South" during the 1970s gave the impression that blacks were returning to their rural origins. Closer study shows that this movement was primarily from northern cities to urban areas in the South. Census Bureau demographer Larry Long reports that among migrants to the South during 1975-80, 61 percent of blacks as compared to 46 percent of whites moved from one urban area to another.[34] In a recent study of southern "black belt" counties, sociologist Lewis Jones of Tuskgee Institute found that there was no measurable return migration to rural areas because those who left for jobs in the factories of the North Central region were either tenant farmers or sharecroppers and did not own land or a home to return to.[35]

Another unexpected migration reversal occurred during the 1970s: metropolitan areas lost population to the nonmetropolitan areas of the country. Indeed, nonmetropolitan areas gained nearly 3 million people through migration. But this pattern was not shared by blacks who continued to register net migration into metropolitan areas of the nation, although at a slower pace after 1975. Black net migration into metropolitan areas amounted to 218,000 in 1965-70, 138,000 in 1970-75, and only 116,000 in 1975-80.[36] Interestingly, the number of blacks moving into metropolitan areas was about the same in all these five-year periods; however, the number moving out has gradually increased.

The overall net loss from the metropolitan areas in the 1970s due to migration was the result of very large net losses by central cities; metropolitan surburban areas continued to grow through migration.

This time, blacks shared the general pattern, with one difference—their net migration into suburbs outweighed their net outflow from central cities so that, overall, metropolitan areas still gained more black population than they lost.

International migration

With the passage of legislation in 1808 outlawing further slave crossings from Africa, forced black in migration to America eventually came to an end. From the early 19th century to the mid-20th century, immigrants scarcely counted in the growth of the U. S. black population. Although this remains true, black immigration has been growing, albeit slowly, in recent decades.

This stream began with a trickle from the West Indies, particularly Jamaica and Trinidad, as early as the 1890s. Most black immigrants to the U. S. still come from the West Indies, with about 170,000 arriving between 1975 and 1979 from the Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the smaller islands.[37] At the same time, about 30,000 Africans entered legally to join the growing number of Africans now living in the U. S. Thus, some 200,000 foreign-born blacks (a number which does not include black Hispanics) moved to the U. S. during the latter half of the 1970s and settled primarily in large urban areas of the Northeast. The number is bound to grow during the 1980s, adding to the changing composition of black America. That population, once overwhelmingly the descendants of slaves with a scattering of immigrants from the West Indies, now includes Haitians, Nigerians, Ethiopians, Ghanians, and more West Indians, as well as a number of black Hispanics from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, and elsewhere.

The universal movement of people to better themselves is thus evident in black America, both in domestic migration—first out of the South and then back again, out of rural areas into cities, and now into suburbs—and increasingly from outside the nation's boundaries.

Family and Marital Status

Earlier black families

The "traditional" American family of childen and their married parents who remain married until one spouse dies hardly existed for blacks during at least two-thirds of their history in this country. The slave had no proper rights as a human being before the law, no legal recognition of marriage, no recognition of lineage. Out of this grew the strong matriarchal affiliation which still characterizes black families because it was the mother who provided such nurturing of youth as was possible in a slave society.[38]

In the first half of the 20th century, available evidence suggests that the black family was often organized around the mother and often disrupted. In 1910, for example, only 36 percent of black women aged 50-54 were living with their first husbands in contrast to 69 percent of white women that age.[39] Another 35 percent of these black women were widowed or divorced, compared to 19 percent of their white counterparts. The situation was little changed by 1940.

As recently as 1960, less than half of all adult black women were married and living with husbands and over 16 percent were either divorced or separated; for white women, the proportions were two-thirds married and 6 percent divorced or separated. Commenting on this situation in the mid-1960s,Hauser stated:

"Family disorganization and unstable family life among Negro Americans is a product of their history and caste status in the United States. During slavery and for at least the first half century after emancipation, the Negro never had the opportunity to acquire the patterns of sexual behavior and family living which characterized middle-class white society. African family patterns were, of course, destroyed during slavery and it was virtually impossible to establish any durable form of social organization. Moreover, as a result of the slave traffic, children were necessarily at-

Table 7. Black and All Families: 1970 and 1980

Family type and presence of own children under 18	1970		1980		Percent increase in number, 1970-1980	
	Black	All races	Black	All races	Black	All races
All families						
Number (in thousands)	4,887	51,586	6,042	58,426	23.6	13.2
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	—	—
Married-couple families	68.0	86.7	55.5	82.5	0.9	7.6
With own children	40.9	49.5	31.2	42.0	−5.9	−3.9
No own children	27.1	37.2	24.3	40.5	11.1	22.9
Single-parent child families	20.2	6.4	30.6	10.2	87.7	81.7
Mother and own children	18.7	5.7	28.9	9.2	91.6	82.4
Father and own children	1.5	0.7	1.7	1.0	39.7	76.5
Other families	11.8	6.9	13.9	7.3	44.9	20.5

Source: Paul C. Glick, "A Demographic Picture of Black Families," in Harriette Pipes McAdoo (ed.), *Black Families* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981) Table 6.1, p. 108.

tached to their mother in a more lasting manner than their father."[40]

Some 20 years later it is appropriate to ask, Is the black family still a "problem"? or is it, as Harvard's Charles Willie argued in 1970, that " . . . . 'the' Negro family is itself a fiction. Different family forms prevail at different classes and income levels throughout our society."[41]

Black families today

In 1980, as Table 7 shows, 86 percent of black families consisted of married couples with or without children or a single parent living with at least one of his/her own children aged under 18. For the total population, 93 percent fall into one of these categories. Thus black families are twice as likely as other families (14 versus 7 percent) to consist of such combinations as grandparents with grandchildren or brothers and sisters living alone.

Black families are also far more likely than others to consist of single parents with children, although the proportion of such families rose for both blacks and the total population during the 1970s, while the proportions of married-couple families declined. In 1980, single parents with children made up 31 percent of all black families compared to 10 percent for the total population. Among black families with children, about half were headed by single parents; for the total population, the comparable proportion was less than one-fifth. This is a gap that has persisted since at least 1950 when only 9 percent of black families were maintained by single parents but the proportion for the total population was a still much lower 4 percent.

Among single-parent families of all races, 90 percent are headed by the mother; for blacks it is 94 percent. Female-headed black families nearly doubled in number during the 1970s. This inevitably affected the living arrangements of black children. In 1980 more black children under age 18 were living with their mother only (44 percent) than with two parents (42 percent).[42] In contrast, 83 percent of white children under 18 were living with two parents and only 14 percent with their mother only.

Three out of ten black households in

Table 8. Marital Status of Blacks and All Races in Selected Age Groups, by Sex: 1960, 1970, 1980

Marital status, age, and race	Men			Women		
	1960[a]	1970	1980	1960[a]	1970	1980
Percent never married, age 20-24						
Black	56	57	79	36	43	69
All races	53	56	69	29	36	50
Percent separated or divorced, age 25-34						
Black	8	9	13	17	20	28
All races	4	5	9	6	8	14
Percent in intact marriage, age 35-44						
Black	71	69	61	62	58	49
All races	84	84	81	80	79	84
Percent widowed, age 55 and over						
Black	16	16	14	47	44	45
All races	12	11	9	38	38	37

Source: Paul C. Glick, "A Demographic Picture of Black Families," in Harriette Pipes McAdoo (ed.), *Black Families* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981) Table 6.3, p. 115.

[a]Black data for 1960 are for nonwhites.

1980 were not maintained by a family. As with the general population, black nonfamily households increased faster than family households during the 1970s. Most of the nonfamily households consisted of either young unmarried persons or elderly widowed persons living alone. As family demographer Paul Glick remarks: "Evidently an increasing number of [black] adults today find it financially feasible to keep up a home alone who would have shared the home of someone else in earlier times."[42] In 1980, 3.5 percent of black households consisted of an unrelated man and woman living together with no other adult, 2 percent of all households in the total population were of this type. Blacks are also more likely than the general population to be living in group quarters. Such differences, along with the fact that only half of the black population in 1980 lived in households maintained by a married couple compared to three-fourths for the general population, reflect the greater marital disruption among blacks compared to whites.

Marital status

As Table 8 shows, the 1970s increase in both delayed marriage and marital disruption (separation and divorce) was even more marked among blacks than among the general population. Among young women aged 20-24, for example, the percentage still unmarried was 43 percent for blacks and 36 percent for the general population in 1970 and widened to 69 percent for blacks and 50 percent for all women that age by 1980. Young blacks' greater tendency to postpone marriage may be linked to their higher unemployment rates and more rapidly increasing college enrollment rates.[44]

In the 25-34 age bracket, 28 percent of black women and 13 percent of black men reported themselves as separated or divorced in 1980, again higher than for the general population. Indeed, the 28 percent for black women was double the 14 percent for all women that age. Conversely, the proportion of people aged 35-44 living in an intact marriage was lower for blacks than whites. Less than

half of black women of that age were in intact marriages compared to 64 percent among white women. Blacks' lower overfall family incomes may be a factor in their higher rates of separation and divorce; for all races, separation and divorce tend to be negatively related with income. Black women are the most likely of all race-sex groups to be divorced. In 1981 there were 289 divorced black women for every 1,000 black women who were married and living with their spouses; this compares with 178 for black men, 118 for white women, and only 82 for white men.[45]

Black men's low life expectancy is the chief explanation for racial differences in marital status at older ages. No less than 45 percent of black women aged 55 and over were widows in 1980 compared to only 37 percent of all women this age, as seen in Table 8.

Thus, differences persist between black and white American families. However, it is appropriate in the 1980s to agree with the comment of black family specialist Marie Peters that black families be regarded as "an important subculture of American society, different in many ways from white families, but possessing a value system, patterns of behavior, and institutions which can be described, understood and appreciated for their own strengths and characteristics."[46]

Some differences between black and white families are narrowing. For example, the proportion of children living in single-parent families increased faster for the total population than for blacks during the 1970s. Although the high and growing proportion of black families headed by a woman is a problem, this is one now increasingly shared by the white population. In fact, given the difficult social and economic problems of blacks, it is remarkable, as Howard University Professor Harriette McAdoo has stated, that "black families have managed to sustain their families under pressures that are now being shared by a growing number of non-black families."[47]

Black families have many strengths.

Education

Before any group can attain a high level of education, the proportion attending school must also be high. Even before this, illiteracy must be virtually eradicated. This section on black education focuses first on illiteracy, then on school enrollment, and finally on educational attainment.

In comparing black and white education levels, it must be realized that it is much easier for the "oppressed" group to make significant percentage gains than it is for the "advantaged" group. Indeed, "increasing the level from a median of four years of school completed to a median of six years completed is usually accomplished more rapidly than increasing the median from, say, 11 years to 13 years."[48] Blacks, being historically far behind whites in education, can be expected to register substantial socalled advances.

Illiteracy

In 1880, 80 percent of all blacks aged 20 and over were illiterate. (Illiteracy was defined as the inability to write, regardless of ability to read.) Fifty years later, in 1930, the percentage had dropped to 16.

With illiteracy almost eliminated, the question has not been asked in censuses since 1930. A Census Bureau survey of 1969 showed that among persons 14 and over a mere 0.7 percent of whites were illiterate compared to 3.5 percent of blacks. While the black rate remained higher, it represented a major accomplishment in a relatively short time. "A single index—the reduction of the illiteracy of the Negro from 95 percent in 1865 to less than 10 percent in 1940 [and less than 4 percent in 1969]—shows that the various educational agencies at work have wrought miracles in three brief generations."[50]

School enrollment

School attendance was practically nonexistent among southern blacks in pre-Civil War days. Indeed, less than 10 percent of southern blacks aged 5-20 were enrolled in school in 1870. By 1930, the proportion was up to 58.5 percent, close to the two-thirds registered among whites of that age in the South. Similar progress took place outside the South, and by 1980 school enrollment rates were virtually the same for blacks and whites throughout the nation (see Table 9). Differences were marked only for persons aged 20-21 (32 percent for whites versus 23 percent for blacks). Interestingly, enrollment rates in the fall of 1980 for all persons aged 3-34 were actually higher for blacks (54 percent) than for whites (49 percent). The reason for this apparent contradiction lies in the different age structures of the two groups. Relatively more blacks than whites are in the ages up to 18 when almost everyone is in school.

Table 9. Black and White School Enrollment, by Age: 1970 and 1980

(Numbers in percent)

	Black		White	
Age	1970	1980	1970	1980
3-4	14.4	38.2	12.1	36.3
5-6	67.8	95.4	73.1	95.8
7-13	95.8	99.4	97.5	99.2
14-15	93.7	97.9	96.3	98.3
16-17	84.3	90.6	90.1	88.6
18-19	47.7	45.7	57.7	46.3
20-21	18.2	23.4	32.2	31.9
22-24	8.8	13.6	15.2	16.4
25-34	4.9	7.8	6.2	7.8
Total, 3-34	54.4	53.9	54.2	48.9

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, United States Summary*, PC(1)-C1, 1972, Tables 88 and 131; and "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1980," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 362, May 1981, Table 6.

Change in the proportion of blacks attending college is a good indicator of educational progress and especially significant in that a college degree is increasingly the "admission ticket" to socioeconomic advancement. The percentage of blacks aged 18-24 enrolled in college has nearly doubled since 1965, from 10.3 percent to 19.4 percent in 1981. Over the same period, the comparable proportion among whites has remained at about 26 percent.[51] As recently as 1970, blacks comprised only 7.7 percent of all college students under age 35, while blacks were then 11.1 percent of the total population. Black college enrollment increased faster than enrollment among other races in the first half of the 1970s, and the approximately 1 million blacks enrolled in college each year since 1976, about 10 pecent of all college students, has been at least equal to the proportion of persons in the eligible population who were black (14- to 34-year-old high school graduates).[52]

Thus, in the 110 years since 1870, black school enrollment has grown from under 10 percent for blacks aged 5-20 to virtual or near parity with whites in the school-going ages. This progress has still to be translated into equality in educational attainment among black and white adults over school age, as noted below. Also, school dropout rates, while converging, are still higher for blacks: in 1981, 13.6 percent of blacks aged 16-19 were out of school without a high school

Table 10. Educational Attainment of Persons Aged 25 and Over, by Race: 1940, 1960, 1980

Years of school completed	Nonwhite		Black	White		
	1940	1960	1980	1940	1960	1980
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 5 years	41.8	23.7	9.2	10.9	6.7	2.6
5-7 years	29.9	24.3	11.0	17.4	12.8	5.3
8 years	11.9	12.9	7.3	29.8	18.1	8.4
High school 1-3 years	8.7	19.0	21.3	15.8	19.3	13.2
4 years	4.5	12.9	30.9	15.3	25.8	37.7
College 1-3 years	1.9	4.1	12.5	5.9	9.3	15.1
4 years or more	1.3	3.1	7.9	4.9	8.1	17.8
Median years completed	5.8	8.2	12.0	8.7	10.9	12.5

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, United States Summary*, PC(1)-C1, 1972, Table 75; and unpublished 1980 Census data.

diploma compared to 11.7 percent for whites.[53]

Educational attainment

Change over time in the educational attainment of adults over 25—the age by which most people have completed their education—is perhaps the best quantitative measure of socioeconomic progress. In the U. S. we can expect steady increases in the average years of school completed for the total adult population as older adults who benefited from much less education die off, to be replaced by younger people who have had far more educational opportunities. Both blacks and whites have registered such progress since 1940, as seen in Table 10.

The proportion of blacks with at least a high school education (4 years of high school and more) grew from about 8 percent (for nonwhites) in 1940 to 51 percent in 1980; for whites, the gain was from 26 percent to 71 percent. Similarly on the college level, by 1980 close to 8 percent of blacks had graduated compared to only 1.3 percent in 1940. However, the 1980 proportion among whites (18 percent) was still more than double that of blacks. Perhaps the greatest improvement for blacks is in the reduction of functional illiteracy—less than five years of schooling—which dropped from 42 percent in 1940 to 9 percent in 1980.

Thus, educational attainment has improved in all segments of the U.S. population, as was to be expected. But have blacks gained relative to whites over the 40-year period? Gains in median years of schooling completed were marked during the 1970s: by 1980 the median for blacks (12.0 years) was almost up to that of whites (12.5 years). The latest data for persons aged 25-34 also reveal recent progress. In 1981, 76 percent of blacks in that age group had completed at least four years of high school and close to 12 percent had had four or more years of college; among whites, the respective proportions were 87 percent and 24 percent. As recently as 1970, comparable proportions were 53 percent and 6 percent for blacks and 76 percent and 17 percent for whites.[54]

Blacks have begun to catch up with whites in educational attainment, although this is a recent phenomenon. The overwhelming embrace of education by blacks since the opportunity was made available to them is equally evident in the decline of illiteracy and rapid increase in school enrollment. Despite legal and extra-legal barriers, blacks have availed themselves of the crumbs offered by the

Harold M. Lambert

College graduates among blacks aged 25-34 doubled from 6 to 12 percent between 1970 and 1981, but the proportion is still only half that of whites.

white power structure. The contest is far from over, but the progress of the 1970s augurs well for eventual convergence, even given the likely setback in black college attendance with the current administration's reductions in federal student aid.

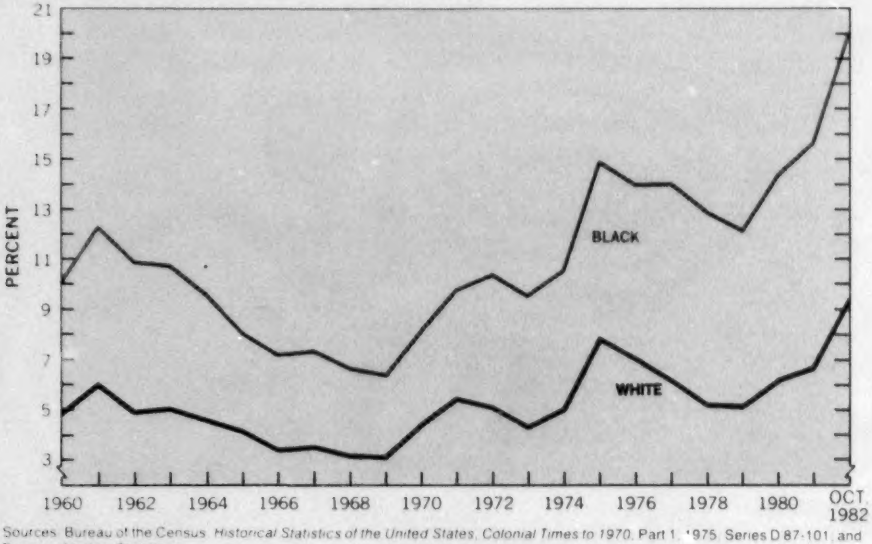
However, the statistics on black educational gains, while encouraging, do not indicate the *quality* of education. Whether in 1880 or in the 1980s, the schooling provided to blacks has generally been inferior to that available to whites. Evidence for this are the latest scores for blacks and whites on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests taken by college-bound high school seniors. That schooling for blacks has improved somewhat is evident in the fact that blacks (and other minorities) contributed most to the upturn in overall SAT scores between 1981 and 1982—the first such upturn since 1963. However, scores for blacks in 1982 were still at least 100 points below those of whites: 341 (out of a possible 800) in the verbal part of the test compared to 444 for whites, and 366 in math versus 483 for whites. Commenting on the disparity, University of Pittsburgh psychologist Lloyd Bond said: "It's a dramatic illustration of the sheer lack of quality eduation these youngsters are receiving . . . Minority students are getting short-changed."[55]

Employment and Occupation

Until recent times, blacks were more likely than whites to be "in the labor force." In 1900, for example, 65 percent of blacks aged 14 and over were so classified compared to 52 percent of whites. The difference was due to there being both more blacks looking for work and higher black labor force participation rates among younger and older persons as well as females. By 1960, there was no difference, and in 1981, slightly fewer blacks aged 16 and over (62 percent) than whites of that age (65 percent) were either working or looking for work.[56] At all ages, white men are now more likely than black men to be in the labor force—a change from earlier patterns. Among women, labor force participation rates are higher for whites up to age 20 and higher for blacks from that age on. Overall, 54 percent of black females were in the labor force in 1981 compared to 52 percent of white females.

While black and white labor force participation rates are similar, this is far from the case with employment per se. For as long as statistics on employment have been gathered, a general "rule of thumb" has been that "whatever the total unemployment rate is, the black rate can be assumed to be twice as large."[57] This was true at the end of the 1950s when more than 10 percent of would-be black

Figure 7. Black and White Unemployment Rates: 1960-1982



Sources: Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1, 1975, Series D 87-101, and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Note: Black data for 1960-1971 are for "Blacks and other races."

workers were unemployed compared to 4.8 percent for whites, and has been true ever since, for males and females as well as the combined unemployment rates, as seen in Figure 7. Even in the healthy economy of the early 1960s, total black unemployment did not fall below 9 percent until 1965. The current situation is, of course, the worst recorded in many decades. But conditions have worsened over the past 15 years.

"Since 1969 the national economy has fluctuated progressively toward worse recessions that placed black workers in an increasingly unfavorable position as each new recession began. For example, about 180,000 black workers lost their jobs during the 1969-71 recession and large numbers were still unemployed when the 1974-75 recession began. Similarly, black workers had barely begun to recover from the 1980 pause in economic growth when the current recession began during the fourth quarter of 1981."[58]

In October 1982 the total U.S. unemployment rate climbed to 10.4 percent—the highest since the Depression of the 1930s. Black unemployment rates stood at more than twice the rates for whites: 20.2 percent versus 9.3 percent for men and women combined; 19.8 percent versus 8.8 percent for men over 20; 16.3 percent versus 7.6 percent among women over 20; and, among teenagers, 46.7 percent for blacks compared to 21.7 percent for whites.

Occupation

Changes in the occupational distribution of black workers over the past 40 years must be considered in the context of shifts in the occupational pattern of the entire nation from manufacturing and agricultural labor into service industries, a category that ranges from auto repair and health and hotel services to education. In 1940, 63 percent of the total work force was engaged in the production of physical goods and only 37 percent were providing services; by 1981

the proportions were 38 percent and 62 percent respectively.[59] Fewer than 3 percent (2.7 percent) of all employed persons worked on farms in 1981.[60]

In 1940, 41 percent of all employed blacks worked in agriculture and another 15 percent were in domestic and personal services. For whites, the proportions were 21 percent in agriculture and 6 percent in domestic and personal services. Nine percent of blacks were white-collar workers compared to 26 percent of employed whites.

By 1960 great changes had occurred, largely as a result of World War II. Only 11 percent black workers remained in agriculture and 8 percent among whites. Less than 1 percent of employed blacks were in domestic service but another 14 percent still provided "personal services." The proportion in white-collar jobs had increased slighly to 11 percent—still less than one-third of the proportion of whites in such occupations.

Occupational gains for black American workers were truly remarkable in the 20 years after 1960. By 1980 some 40 percent were in white-collar occupations compared to 54 percent for whites, and fewer than 2 percent were farm workers versus nearly 3 percent among the white employed.[61] The proportion in craft occupations (9.6 percent) was approaching that of whites (13.3 percent). However, these broad occupational shifts do not tell the whole story. Assuming that blacks represent about 11 percent of the total population of "working age" (16-64), more detailed occupational statistics show that they are overrepresented in certain occupations and underrepresented in many others (see Table 11).

Black women still made up 32 percent of all women employed in private households in 1980 and 16 percent of other "personal service" female workers. At the top of the ladder, black men still hold only 2 to 3 percent of the best-paid white-collar jobs—in engineering, medicine, law, and university teaching—although their proportions are higher in the better paying blue-collar jobs, such as car-

Carl Haub

Black women in particular have made notable occupational gains since 1970.

Table 11. Proportion of Blacks Among Workers in Selected Occupations: 1980

(Percent of total in each occupation, by sex)

Occupation	Black men	Black women
Professional and technical	4.4	8.8
Engineers	2.2	[a]
Physicians, Dentists	2.1	5.0
Lawyers, Judges	3.1	7.1
Teachers, college and university	3.3	5.3
Managers, Administrators	3.2	5.2
Sales	3.5	4.4
Clerical	10.9	8.9
Craft and kindred workers	7.0	8.1
Operatives, except transport	11.7	14.6
Transport equipment operatives	14.7	11.2
Farmers and farm managers	1.6	[a]
Farm laborers and foremen	12.7	7.0
Service workers, except private household	15.7	15.9
Private household workers	[a]	31.9

Source: Diane Nilsen Westcott, "Blacks in the 1970's: Did They Scale the Job Ladder?" *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1982, Table 3, p. 32.
[a] Less than 4,000.

Table 12. Median Income of Black and White Families: 1960, 1970-1981

(in constant 1981 dollars)

Year	Median family income			Black family income as percent of white income
	Black	White	All races	
1960	9,919[a]	17,919	17,259	57
1970	14,707	23,975	23,111	61
1971	14,462	25,966	23,097	60
1972	14,922	25,107	24,166	59
1973	14,877	25,777	24,663	58
1974[b]	14,765	24,728	23,795	60
1975	14,835	24,110	23,183	62
1976	14,766	24,823	23,898	59
1977	14,352	25,124	24,027	57
1978	15,166	25,606	24,591	59
1979	14,590	25,689	24,635	57
1980	13,989	24,176	23,204	58
1981	13,266	25,517	22,388	56

Source: Bureau of the Census, "Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1981, Advance Data from the March 1982 Current Population Survey, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 134, July 1982, Table 3.

[a]1960 data for "blacks and other races."

[b]Methodology revised in 1974.

pentry and plumbing. In a recent review of black occupational gains in the 1970s, economist Diane Westcott noted that "Most of the occupational upgrading occurred among the smaller number of blacks who resided in suburban areas."[62] In the central cities, where the vast majority of blacks still live, "only black women competed successfully for jobs in those occupations in which women are heavily recruited." With the onset of the computer age, the occupational structure of the nation will continue to change. To compete on fair terms with whites for the new jobs opening up in the remainder of the 1980s and later, blacks' access to better education, training, and retraining will have to be improved.[63]

Income and Poverty

If blacks have made progress vis-à-vis white Americans in education and occupation, particularly in recent years, has this been reflected in improved incomes? In the U.S., what a family or person earns is the bottom line in determining "progress."

Scattered data available for nonwhites before 1960 show that in 1939, the median annual earnings of nonwhite males ($460) were just 41 percent of those of white males ($1,112).[64] The immediate post-World War II period registered slight improvements: nonwhite *family* income was 50 percent of that of whites in 1947 and 53 percent in 1954. By 1960 the median nonwhite family income had inched up to 57 percent of the median for white families, as seen in Table 12, which measures black-white differentials in median family income since 1960 in constant 1981 dollars.

There can be no question that some progress took place during the 1960s when the Great Society and the civil rights movement were in full flower. By 1970 the median income for black families stood at 61 percent of the white median. The peak for the 1970s came in 1975 (62 percent). Since then the income gap between black and white families has widened again and the 1980s show little promise of improvement. Indeed, the level in 1981, when the median black family income of $13,266 was 56 percent

of the white median of $23,517, was even lower than the nonwhite level of 57 percent in 1960.

More detailed data show variations in the income differential, but in no case does black family income even approximate white family income. Among those families where the wife is in the paid labor force, for example, the 1981 median family income for blacks was $25,040, or 84 percent of the white median of $29,713.[65] By region, black families fared best in the West, where their median of $16, 592 was 68 percent of the white median ($24,324). At the other extreme, in the South, black family income ($12,283) amounted to 56 percent of white median family income ($22, 051)—the same as for the nation as a whole.

To be sure, the fact that blacks are less educated and more likely to be in lower paying jobs than whites contributes to the overall income differential between the two groups. But studies have found that the differential persists among blacks and whites of similar education and occupation and in the same regions. For example, demographer Daniel Price, using 1960 census data, found that even in occupations in which nonwhites' median educational attainment is above that of whites, the median nonwhite income is lower.[66] Also using 1960 census data, Paul Siegel concluded that, even if nonwhite men aged 15-64 had been distributed in the same regional, educational, and occupational patterns as their white counterparts, their average income in 1959 would still have been 38 percent below that of white men.[67] The evidence is clear—blacks earn less money than whites, irrespective of household composition, education, or region.

Poverty

Sad to say, the words "black" and "poor" have always been closely related. While most blacks are *not* poor and many whites are, the difference in the proportions living in poverty is so great that the unfortunate word association is appropriate. Contributing to the large number of poor blacks is the history of blacks in America, from slavery followed by serfdom and sharecropping in the South, to a ghetto existence in northern cities. Although the proportion of poor blacks has generally declined in the two decades that the Census Bureau has been measuring "poverty," the problem exists in 1982 as it did 50 and 100 years ago.

The poverty "threshold" used by the Census Bureau is set at about three times the cost of an "economy food plan" and varies by family size and age of the "householder," with annual adjustments for inflation. It is based solely on money income and does not reflect the fact that many low-income persons receive noncash benefits such as food stamps, Medicaid and Medicare, and housing aid. In 1981 the average poverty level for a family of four was $9,287.

Thirty-four percent of all black individuals compared to 11 percent of all whites fell below the poverty level in 1981. There was, in fact, an increase in the poverty rate in all groups between 1979 and 1981 and presumably the increase will continue in 1982. Close to 2 million black families, 30.8 percent of the total, were living in poverty in 1981; among whites, 4.7 million families, or 8.8 percent, were classified as poor (see Table 13). Poverty is particularly evident among households headed by a female with no husband present. Over one-half (52.9 percent) of all such black families were below the poverty level in 1981; among such white families, the rate was 27.4 percent.

These data are perhaps the key to the present dilemma of the black family and have the potential of creating a permanent "underclass" for decades to come. Whether looking at family size or educational attainment and occupation of the householder, the result is always the same—blacks are considerably more likely to be in poverty than their white counterparts. Detailed poverty data for 1981 show that:[68]

Table 13. Black and White Families Below Poverty Level: 1959, 1966-81

Year	Families below poverty level				Ratio of black to white poverty rate
	Black		White		
	Number (in thousands)	Poverty rate (% of all black families)	Number (in thousands)	Poverty rate (% of all white families)	
1959	1,860	48.1	6,185	15.2	3.2
1966[a]	1,620	35.5	4,106	9.3	3.8
1967	1,555	33.9	4,056	9.0	3.8
1968	1,366	29.4	3,616	8.0	3.7
1969	1,366	27.9	3,575	7.7	3.6
1970	1,481	29.5	3,708	8.0	3.6
1971	1,484	28.8	3,751	7.9	3.7
1972	1,529	29.0	3,441	7.1	4.1
1973	1,527	28.1	3,219	6.6	4.3
1974[a]	1,479	26.9	3,352	6.8	4.0
1975	1,513	27.1	3,838	7.7	3.5
1976	1,617	27.9	3,560	7.1	3.9
1977	1,637	28.2	3,540	7.0	4.0
1978	1,622	27.5	3,523	6.9	4.0
1979[a]	1,722	27.8	3,581	6.9	4.0
1980	1,826	28.9	4,195	8.0	3.6
1981	1,972	30.8	4,670	8.8	3.5

Source: Bureau of the Census. "Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1981, Advance Data from the March Current Population Survey," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 134, July 1982, Table 15.
[a]Methodology revised in 1966, 1974 and 1979.

- The larger the family, the higher the probability of being in poverty. Among childless black families, 16.4 percent are in poverty. Among those with five or more children, 74.3 percent are in poverty. Comparable figures for white families are 5.0 and 34.7 percent.
- The higher the completed schooling of the householder, the less likely it is that a family will be poor. Forty percent are poor among black families headed by a householder with no more than three years of high school. The proportion falls to 26 percent in families of a householder whose schooling ended with a high school diploma and 12 percent where the householder has some college training. The chances of a black family's being poor in the latter case (12.4 percent) are equivalent to those of a white family whose householder has only eight years of elementary school education (12.3 percent).
- For both black and white families, the higher the occupational status of the householder, the lower the poverty rate. However, within occupational categories, poverty rates are markedly higher for black than for white families. This is particularly true for clerical workers (14.9 percent for black families versus 5.0 for whites) and farmers (50.0 to 28.3 percent).

In sum, the probability of being poor is considerably greater for blacks than for whites,even controlling for selected socioeconomic and demographic variables. Blacks are not poor simply because they have larger families on average, or are less educated and likely to be in the less prestigious occupations. Within each category of these variables, blacks are

much more likely to be poor than are whites.

Has there been any improvement in the past two decades? In 1959, when poverty statistics were first computed, 48 percent of black families were classified as poor (Table 13). The rate was down to 35.5 percent in 1966 and dropped steadily to a low of 26.9 percent in 1974, followed by some years of fluctuation. The 1981 level (30.8 percent) is the highest recorded since 1967. The progress of the 1960s and early 1970s was obviously temporary.

Similarly, as Table 13 shows, there has been absolutely no progress toward catching up with whites. For the past 15 years, black families have been three-and-a-half to more than four times as likely as white families to be truly poor, even higher than the differential in 1959 (3.2).

The impact on welfare use is predictable. Nearly one of every five blacks is on welfare, according to figures derived from a spring 1982 study of the nation's largest cash welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children.[69] This study also indicates that some 40 percent of all black families with children under 18 are getting AFDC benefits, compared to 6.8 percent of white families with children.

Examining the various dimensions of black's socioeconomic status in the early 1980s leads to a striking conclusion: on the non-monetary side, that is, in education and occupation, blacks have made significant progress in the past two decades; on the monetary side—income—blacks have made no gains and indeed appear to be falling somewhat behind in their quest for equality.

The Future of Black America

Is there enough evidence of black progress to realistically expect parity with whites perhaps by the end of the century? The picture is rosy for education, but when one considers the mixed record on fertility and occupation and the dismal record on mortality rates and income, it becomes clear that a major move by American blacks into mainstream middle-class America is not imminent. To be sure, a black middle class is emerging, but it remains a minority of the black population and is far less affluent than the white middle class. Indeed, it has been labeled a "second-class middle class" by one scholar.[70]

Blacks are approaching the norm in demographic behavior, particularly in migration and overall fertility, although teenage and out-of-wedlock childbearing, mortality, and health remain troublesome areas. Blacks are nearing the median range in educational attainment, though more progress is needed. Blacks are entering the white-collar occupations, though at lower levels than whites. Yet all these gains do not yield equality if the overall system still presents barriers to realizing this goal. To better appreciate the factors that can help or hinder black advancement, one must look at broad societal issues over which blacks have little control. Three such areas are worth particular study: the impact of the baby bust, the current administration's socioeconomic policy, and current immigration levels.

Baby bust generation's bright prospects

The 33 million children born in the 1970s will probably be the smallest U. S. birth cohort in the second half of the 20th century. They follow the massive baby boom cohort and will precede the "echo" cohort produced by the baby boom generation as it reaches childbearing ages. Proportionately, the number ready for the business and professional stage of the life cycle in the late 1990s will be small. In a recent article entitled "Don't Forget the Children," Alan Pifer observed:

"Every child alive today or born in the years just ahead, whether male, female, black,

white, Hispanic or otherwise, will be a scarce resource and a precious asset as an adult in the early part of the next century. At that time, the nation's standard of living, its capacity to defend itself—perhaps its very viability as nation—will be almost wholly dependent on the small contingent of men and women who are today's children."

He went on:

"Many educators believe the nation cannot afford to waste any of this potential talent. It would be wise for society to insure that this generation of the 1970s and the 1980s receives the very best education possible to train them for their adult responsibility."[71]

Included in this "precious" generation are today's young black children and those about to be born. If they are to share the bright prospects of the baby bust generation and its critical role in America's future, they, too, must receive the training appropriate for the emerging technological society.

Harold M. Lambert

Black children of the 1970s baby bust generation need appropriate training if they are to share in that generation's bright prospects.

Current socioeconomic policy

Unfortunately, the policies of the current administration in Washington dampen this possibility. Recent cutbacks in educational assistance and the emerging laissez-faire philosophy are likely to delay further educational and occupational advancement for black Americans.

For blacks (as well as others), the current administration's dramatic reversal on economic policy has already created problems. Furthermore, this new economic policy is accompanied by a sharp shift in government attitudes toward civil rights which will significantly reduce its role in the support and protection of equal opportunity.

The most important question for black Americans is the potential impact of Reaganomics on black employment and income. Wharton School professor Bernard Anderson recently warned that "black unemployment can be expected to rise, and black income to fall significantly during the course of the current recession." He added:

"The near term prospects for black income and employment are not good, but even beyond that there is still a question about the potential impact of the new economic policy on black economic progress, even if the policy eventually works as intended. . . . There is no assurance that the job creations that might emerge from current policies will help narrow the employment gap between black and other workers, but it is almost certain that broad budget cuts for social programs will greatly reduce the opportunities for the disadvantaged to become prepared to make a productive contribution to society."[72]

If no major changes in social and economic policies transpire before the end of the 1980s, blacks will be unprepared to seize the bright opportunity created by the baby bust phenomenon.

Competing with immigrants

Blacks are also affected more than any other U. S. group by the massive increase in immigration since the mid-1970s. The surge of legal and illegal immigrants and refugees, no longer

white Europeans but primarily Hispanics and Asians, ironically presents new competition for black Americans just as they have finally begun to edge up the socioeconomic ladder.

Observers disagree on how massive immigration will affect the U. S. job market over the long run. Some economists argue that the newcomers will create more jobs than they take over. Others are convinced that curtailing illegal immigration would greatly alleviate U. S. unemployment. Testifying to the House Subcommittee on Immigration in April 1982, Under-Secretary of Labor Malcolm Lovell declared:

"While it is impossible to quantify the impact of illegal immigration on U. S. workers, the laws of supply and demand dictate the direction of its effects on low-skilled American workers. To an unknown extent, illegal immigration depresses the wages and working conditions of competing low-skilled workers in their country of destination, and reduces their employment opportunities."[73]

Whatever the long-term impact on U.S. minorities, it is clear that right now the masses of new immigrants are taking jobs away from disadvantaged blacks, particularly black teenagers. Furthermore, it cannot be argued that U. S. blacks and whites shun the kinds of jobs that illegal immigrants typically fill. Under-Secretary Lovell further noted:

"In 1981, close to 30 percent of all workers employed in this country—some 29 million people—were holding down the kinds of low-skilled industrial, service, and agricultural jobs in which illegal aliens typically find employment. In addition, it cannot be claimed that Americans will not take low-wage jobs. In 1981, an estimated 10.5 million workers were employed at or below the minimum wage."

The traditional pattern of upward mobility in the U. S. had been for the last-arrived white immigrant group to be boosted up the ladder as the next similar group entered the country. Thus, the Irish moved up when the Italians arrived to fill the bottom-level jobs. Similarly, blacks from the rural South took over the least desirable jobs when they entered the industrial North.

Today an interesting paradox is emerging. Under the traditional "American way," blacks should welcome illegal immigrants who presumably are assuming the least desirable jobs and making possible their move up the ladder. But blacks have never been part of the majority society and moving up is a more complex challenge for them than it was for earlier white immigrant groups. Instead, the newest immigrants, particularly those here illegally, are competing directly with a majority of black Americans for those least desirable jobs. At the same time, many other blacks, acting as did the earlier "New Americans," are refusing to take those low-paying jobs and being criticized for it. How this will be resolved remains to be seen. Perhaps if better educational facilities were made available to them, blacks would readily yield the bottom-level,if necessary, jobs to the latest arrivals. However, any long-term continuation of current socioeconomic policies would make such progress impossible.

Much of the sociological literature has stagnated in its examination of black life. This is partly due to social scientists' inability to resolve a fundamental conceptual issue: Is the black experience different from that of whites in the context of American social organization? If so, has this meant that the paths that blacks have been permitted to follow in their pursuit of progress have necessarily been different? If the avenues available for black mobility and progress are indeed different because of structural and social barriers, then the ultimate achievement must be different—hence, the concept "second-class middle class." This concept in no way reflects upon the abilities of the black middle class but recognizes the barriers that still hinder its functioning.

This leads us to the underclass notion. The black underclass has not been created by individuals any more than in

other societies. The underclass is a real, existing class in current capitalist development. It is not a "limited lumpen" class, nor is it "surplus" in the Marxist sense. It is a class created by structural and social barriers to improvement or mobility. For example, blacks have often been the first fired in the current recession because they were the last hired and many will not be rehired because their jobs are being eliminated as the U. S. shifts from traditional industry to the high-technology age. Lacking the skills to meet the demands of the changing job market, their future as viable workers is in doubt. This threatens to produce an even larger and more permanent underclass within the black population. It is this which needs immediate and *urgent* attention if blacks are to join the mainstream of American society.

At the outset of this *Bulletin*, it was asked: "Is the Negro still a liability or an opportunity for America?" The jury is still out, but the options are obvious. The United States *needs* all the qualified people it can train for the foreseeable future. The United States has an unlimited potential of future residents to fill the still needed low-level positions in its socioeconomic system. The acceptance of blacks into the mainstream would appear to be the logical route to follow. The alternative option would maintain the status quo, with a few black Americans "making it" while the majority remain at the bottom of the ladder, competing ever more fiercely with new immigrants. America is indeed free to choose whether the Negro should remain its liability or its opportunity. Myrdal's words written in 1944 remain true today. □

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Members of the Population Reference Bureau support an organization that is dedicated to the objective analysis and reporting of one of the world's most compelling concerns.

Population Reference Bureau, Inc.
1337 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 785-4664
Cable address: POPREF WASHINGTON D.C.